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ABSTRACT

Volunteer student union programming board members at the University of Maryland, College Park were asked to designate the five programming board activities or experiences that they considered to be the most appealing. Activities and experiences had been previously rated according to how they met motivational needs for achievement, affiliation, or power. This method enabled the researchers to attach volunteer activity preferences to group motivations for volunteering. It was found that the programming board members were most interested in serving program attendees, making new friends, and being "involved" on campus. From these activity preferences, it was inferred that the volunteers as a group were primarily achievement- and affiliation-motivated. The findings have implications for volunteer recruitment and retention. In addition, a new methodology for studying campus volunteer organizations was introduced. (Author)

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VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO MOTIVATIONAL NEEDS: A STUDY OF THE STAMP UNION PROGRAM COUNCIL

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SUMMARY

Volunteer student union programming board members at the University of Maryland, College Park were asked to designate the five programming board activities or experiences that they considered to be most appealing. Activities and experiences had been previously rated according to how they met motivational needs for achievement, affiliation, or power (Atkinson, 1964; McClelland, 1962). This method enabled the researchers to attach volunteer activity preferences to group motivations for volunteering. It was found that the programming board members were most interested in serving program attendees, making new friends, and being "involved" on campus. From these activity preferences, it was inferred that the volunteers as a group were primarily achievement- and affiliation-motivated. The findings have implications for volunteer recruitment and retention. In addition, a new methodology for studying campus volunteer organizations was introduced.

For volunteers to be satisfied and effective members of campus organizations, there should be congruence between their expectations and the reality of what the volunteer program offers them in the way of an experience (Phillips, 1982). Research exploring volunteer characteristics and motivations is an important first step toward an assessment of both volunteer expectations and program attributes.

Sergent and Sedlacek (in press), found that student volunteers in different campus organizations had different characteristics and motivational needs. It follows that not all volunteer organizations are alike, nor are the students within them alike. A more meaningful and comprehensive understanding of student volunteers can be attained through in-depth studies of volunteers within organizations.

The Stamp Union Program Council

The Stamp Union Program Council (SUPC), the volunteer student programming organization administered by the Stamp Student Union, has a two-fold purpose:

(1) To offer creative recreational, educational, cultural, social, arts, and entertainment programs which are responsive to the needs and preferences of the campus community

(2) To provide experiential opportunities for students to develop life skills by planning, implementing, and evaluating programs as members of the Program Council.

Past research (Sergent & Sedlacek, in press) has found that SUPC members had a greater diversity of Holland (1985) codes than did volunteers in other student organizations. SUPC members were most often Investigative (38%), followed by Social (21%), Artistic

(20%), and Enterprising (19%). This diversity was attributed to SUPC's organization into nine autonomous subgroups, which provide a variety of environments for volunteers.

Without student volunteers, SUPC's capacity to fulfill its programming mission would be greatly limited. Concomitantly, the organization offers student volunteers a unique opportunity to build upon their interests in the programming area. One potential benefit to the volunteer was suggested by DiSabatino (1983), who described how the volunteer experience itself could be marketed during a job search after graduation.

Where the Volunteer Meets the Organization

The relationship between volunteers and the organizations they serve is dictated by two elements: volunteer motivations and organizational needs. The point of contact between these two elements is the actual volunteer experience, which has the potential to satisfy the needs of both the volunteer and the organization .

In reviewing effective strategies for placement of volunteers in student organizations, DiSabatino (1984) recommended conducting interviews or giving volunteers pen-and-paper questionnaires about their motivational and developmental needs and wants. One way of defining these needs is through volunteer activity preferences. Such preferences can reveal motivations for volunteering, with practical applications following in the areas of volunteer recruitment and management.

Volunteer Motivations

Most writers agree that volunteering is elicited by a mixture

of altruism and self-interest (e.g., Fitch, 1987; Naylor, 1967; Phillips, 1982; Schafer, 1980). Underlying manifest reasons for volunteering is a set of psychological needs. Henderson (1980, 1981) proposed that expectancy theory, a motivational theory from the organizational behavior literature (Hampton, Summer, & Weber, 1973; Hersey & Blanchard, 1982), can be used to explain volunteer behavior. Expectancy theory says that people are motivated by expected outcomes. Volunteers give their service to an organization because they expect to get certain motivational needs met in the process.

McClelland (1955, 1962) and Atkinson (1964) defined the primary motivational needs as: need for achievement, need for affiliation, and need for power. In a study of adult 4-H volunteers, Henderson (1981) found that most were motivated by affiliation needs.

METHOD

Subjects were 91 students attending SUPC committee meetings in the beginning of the fall semester, 1988. The sample represented approximately a 90% participation rate, according to membership estimates by committee chairs.

Students were given an anonymous survey, a checklist of 29 volunteer activities on which they were asked to designate the five most appealing (see Appendix). Activities had been previously rated by trained graduate students as achievement-, affiliation-, or power-motivated. The motivational ratings assigned to activities were not apparent to the subjects as they completed the checklist.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze activity preferences. Chi-square analyses were performed to determine whether there were differences in activity preferences based on gender or length of time as a programming board member. Finally, group motivations for volunteering were inferred from activity preferences.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

See Table 1 for sample characteristics.

Motivational Ratings

The raters assigning motivational categories to volunteer activities agreed upon 19 of the 29 checklist items, or 66%. Motivational ratings for the activities are presented in Table 2. Only agreed-upon items were used to make inferences about volunteer motivations as expressed through activity preferences. However, items which were not categorized by the raters still held valuable information about volunteer activity preferences themselves.

Activity Preferences

Table 2 summarizes the percentage of subjects who designated each activity as "one of the five most appealing".

Group Differences in Activity Preferences

There were no significant differences in volunteer activity preferences according to gender or length of time as an SUPC member. However, the analyses suggested that members who had volunteered for less than a semester may have had greater interest in "making new friends", "being 'involved' on campus", and "meeting

potential dating partners" than those who had volunteered for a semester or more.

Volunteer Motivations

From the most and least preferred activities, inferences can be made about group motivations for volunteering:

* The need for achievement was high among SUPC members. Five of the 10^ most often selected activities were rated as achievement-motivated.

* The need for affiliation was also high. Although only three of the top 10^ activities were affiliation-motivated, two of these were selected by 60% to 70% of the sample.

* The need for power was not a strong motivator for SUPC members. Four of the 10 least often selected activities were rated as power-motivated.

DISCUSSION

Motivational Ratings

Based on the distribution of motivational ratings for the activities on the checklist (7 - achievement; 6 - affiliation; 6 - power), it appears that there are opportunities in SUPC for volunteers with all three predominant motivational needs.

Activity Preferences

It seems that SUPC members most preferred activities that allowed them to learn about programming and execute programs. This was reflected in five of the top ten^ activities: serving program attendees; planning programs; being part of a successful programming effort; implementing programs; and learning about programming. This finding supports the work of Herzberg and his colleagues (1967,

^ There were actually 11 "top 10" activities because the same percentage of respondents (20%) selected items 9, 10, and 11.

1968), who asserted that the task itself is one of the greatest motivators. Because the organization is a programming board, members were most interested in activities pertaining directly to programming.

A second type of "activity" that SUPC members preferred was the volunteer experience of growing personally and interpersonally through campus involvement. Five of the top ten^ activities related to this: making new friends; being "involved" on campus; experiencing personal growth; representing the interests of students on campus; and working with fellow committee members.

Four of the activities in which SUPC members showed the least interest related to leadership: handling the budget; conducting committee meetings; delegating tasks; and running for office. In addition, few members indicated that recruitment, training, and orientation of new members appealed to them. Other activities that these volunteers found less appealing included meeting with advisors and attending to the operational details of programming.

There are a number of ways in which the organization can be structured to fit the activity preferences of its volunteers. For example, the fact that all programming board members wanted to serve program attendees suggests that advisors should look for ways to maximize this aspect of the volunteer experience. As these volunteers did not tend to be interested in recruiting, training, and orienting new members, such activities may have to be delegated to program staff. Recognizing that less desirable tasks cannot be

^ There were actually 11 "top 10" activities because the same percentage of respondents (20%) selected items 9, 10, and 11.

wished away, members who are willing to perform them should be given appropriate recognition. Building on this, highly desirable volunteer activities can be used as incentives or rewards (e.g., members can take a more active role in planning programs after they help implement them for a period of time).

Volunteer Motivations

It appears that SUPC members as a group were highest in the needs for achievement and affiliation. The finding that these volunteers did not tend to be power-motivated invites more than one possible response. Staff who work with and advise SUPC members can choose to either work around this issue or work through this issue. The former approach entails meeting these volunteers where they are - accepting their lack of motivation in this area and taking compensatory measures. Advisors might be called upon to provide more structure for the volunteers, or even to assume leadership roles that are traditionally filled by students in the organization.

The latter approach, working through the power issue with these volunteers, is perhaps more "developmental" and probably more difficult. Through mentoring and modeling, advisors can demonstrate to SUPC members the value of learning to influence others in a positive way. Leadership potential is also more likely to develop if volunteers are made to feel valued and respected within the organization. When SUPC members find that their programming ideas are both recognized and realized, they will be socialized to take more active roles. To the extent that they become invested in the projects they instigate, volunteers will be motivated to insure that

these projects come to fruition. Those who otherwise do not enjoy delegating tasks or managing the budget may become interested in these activities when they realize that they are crucial components of successful programming.

Conclusion

In an article on volunteer programming, Henderson (1980) offered the following advice for motivating volunteers:

> Volunteer programs must be planned with volunteers in mind. This means planning tasks based on individuals' needs, recruiting by appealing to needs, supervising in a way that will allow needs to be met, and rewarding people with what is important to them. (p. 63)

Use of this methodology yields a profile of volunteer activity preferences that provides valuable information about what volunteers really want from their experience. Accordingly, the volunteer program can be structured ways that will capitalize on volunteer needs and interests.

Group motivational needs of volunteers can be inferred from activity preferences. Volunteer satisfaction will be enhanced if motivational needs for achievement, affiliation, and power can be met through volunteer involvement.

While student development is a primary concern here, the organization must also be sustained. Attending to volunteer activity preferences and motivational needs increases the likelihood that volunteers will be retained to make a meaningful contribution toward fulfilling the organization's mission on campus.

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Appendix

SUPC Checklist

1. Sex (circle one): Male Female

2. Race/ethnic origin:

   ____ Black (African-American)
   ____ White (not of Hispanic origin)
   ____ Asian (Asian-American, Pacific Islander)
   ____ Hispanic (Latino, Chicano)
   ____ International student
   ____ Other (specify): _____

3. Year in school (circle one): Fresh. Soph. Jr. Sr. Grad.

4. School major (specify): _____

5. Resident status (circle one): Campus Resident Commuter

6. For what volunteer organization do you work?

   ____ SUPC ____ Help Center
   ____ Maryland Images ____ Alpha Phi Omega
   ____ Circle K

7. How many <u>whole</u> semesters have you volunteered for this organization?

   ____ less than one ____ three
   ____ one ____ four
   ____ two ____ more than four

8. On the average, how many hours per month do you volunteer for this organization? (specify) _____

9. Are you receiving academic credit or a stipend in exchange for volunteering? ____ yes ____ no

10. List below the occupations you have considered in thinking about your future. List the careers you have daydreamed about as well as those you have discussed with others. Put your most recent job choice on Line 1 and work backwards to the earlier jobs you have considered.

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

11. Have your ever held or are you currently holding a leadership position in your volunteer organization? ____ yes ____ no

12. Please indicate the <u>five</u> SUPC experiences or activities which you consider to be most appealing, whether or not you have actually participated in them. Place a check mark next to each of the <u>five</u> items you choose.

___ Representing the interests of students on campus
___ Recruiting new SUPC members
___ Implementing programs
___ Making new friends
___ Making contacts on campus
___ Holding SUPC office
___ Learning about programming
___ Meeting with SUPC advisor
___ Evaluating programs
___ Delegating tasks
___ Building my resume
___ Being "involved" on campus
___ Working with fellow committee members
___ Planning programs
___ Handling the SUPC budget
___ Attending SUPC retreats
___ Being part of a successful programming effort
___ Conducting committee meetings
___ Attending to operational details of programming
___ Meeting potential dating partners
___ Making contacts in the entertainment/recreation industry
___ Serving program attendees
___ Running for office
___ Experiencing personal growth
___ Interacting with program attendees
___ Experiencing professional growth
___ Selecting SUPC programs
___ Training and orienting new SUPC members
___ Getting good job experience

Thank you for your assistance!

Table 1
Sample Characteristics (N=91)

Characteristic	Percent of Sample
GENDER	
Male	42
Female	58
RACE	
Black	3
White	80
Asian	13
Hispanic	2
Other	1
CAMPUS STATUS	
Freshman	34
Sophomore	26
Junior	28
Senior	11
Graduate	1
RESIDENT STATUS	
Campus Resident	73
Commuter	28
MEMBERS WHO RECEIVE ACADEMIC CREDIT OR STIPEND	
Members who do	7
Members who do not	93
MEMBERS WHO HAVE HELD SUPC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS	
Members who have	41
Members who have not	59
LENGTH OF SUPC INVOLVEMENT	
(Number of semesters)	
<1	59
1	9
2	19
3	3
>3	12
HOURS PER MONTH OF SUPC INVOLVEMENT (Mean=15.3; Standard Deviation=20.3)	

* Percentages may not add up to 100, due to rounding.

Table 2
Volunteer Preferences for Activities That Meet Motivational Needs for Achievement, Affiliation, or Power

Volunteer Activity	Motivational Category**	Percent* Selecting Activity
Serving program attendees	X	100
Making new friends	Af	69
Being "involved" on campus	Af	62
Experiencing personal growth	Ac	37
Planning programs	X	32
Being part of a successful programming effort	Ac	29
Representing the interests of students on campus	X	25
Working with fellow committee members	Af	23
Building my resume	Ac	21
Implementing programs	Ac	21
Learning about programming	Ac	21
Making contacts on campus	P	19
Selecting SUPC programs	P	19
Making contacts in entertainment or recreation industry	X	15
Experiencing professional growth	Ac	13
Meeting potential dating partners	Af	12
Attending SUPC retreats	Af	10
Getting good job experience	X	10
Holding SUPC office	X	10
Evaluating programs	X	8
Interacting with program attendees	Af	6
Recruiting new SUPC members	X	6
Running for office	P	6
Attending to operational details of programming	Ac	4
Delegating tasks	P	4
Conducting committee meetings	P	3
Meeting with SUPC advisor	X	3
Training and orienting new SUPC members	X	2
Handling the SUPC budget	P	1

* Refers to the percentage of volunteers who rated the activity as one of the five most appealing out of the entire checklist.

** Motivational Categories: Ac = Need for Achievement; Af = Need for Affiliation; P = Need for Power; X = Raters did not agree.